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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/E
LONDON AND BRUSSELS FOR ACTING A/S CARTER

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA - TFG AND ISLAMISTS CLASH IN MOGADISHU

Summary

11. (SBU) Summary: In the fiercest fighting in Mogadishu since Ethiopian troops' January departure, Hisbul Islam, a recently-formed alliance of Islamic militias, clashed with Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces in western Mogadishu on February 24 and briefly in the morning on February 25. The violence, which ended in stalemate, was likely over publicly popular TFG efforts to remove illegal roadblocks, a source of extorted revenue for neighborhood clans. Dozens of people were killed and wounded, reportedly mostly civilian. At one point AMISOM forces joined the fight after taking mortar fire, but they were not the Islamists' main targets. End Summary.

Outbreak of Fighting

12. (SBU) On February 24 and 25, the extremist group "Hisbul Islam" - a recent alliance of Islamist militia - and TFG police based at Tribunka Square in the KM4 neighborhood, clashed in the southern Hodan district of Mogadishu. It was the city's heaviest fighting since Ethiopian troops left Mogadishu in early January. An estimated 20 people, most of whom were reported to be civilians, were killed and 90 wounded, media reported. The battle ended in a stalemate, our contacts in Mogadishu told us. According to a Hisbul Islam (HI) spokesman, HI attacked TFG positions in response to the TFG joint security forces' move last week to dismantle illegal checkpoints. Media and our contacts report that AMISOM also engaged Hisbul Islam after AMISOM's KM4 base came under mortar attack.

13. (SBU) TFG Police Commissioner Abdi Hassan "Qeybdiid" told us he lamented the high number of civilian casualties, but Islamic forces had attacked his police. Lending credence to Qeybdiid's provocation claim, Yusuf Mohamed Siyad "Indha Adde," an extremist who in the past has listed himself among Hisbul Islam's leaders, publicly condemned HI for the attack and resigned from the group. He called on Islamist fighters to honor a call by the Council of Somali Islamic Scholars for a 120 day ceasefire. We subsequently heard from AU sources that Indha Adde may have disavowed the violence in response to pressure from his businessmen backers.

The Public Condemns the Violence

14. (SBU) Mogadishu's elders, clerics, business community and public

condemned yesterday's renewed fighting. Hawiye elders and the al-Islah Islamic organization denounced the violence and called for peace. Similarly, Somali artists, private Mogadishu residents, and clerics called radio shows to criticize the fighting. One civil society member said Mogadishu residents are fed up with perpetrators of violence. "Soon there will come a popular uprising against Hisbul Islam and other radical Islamists hell-bent on violence," he told us on the phone from Mogadishu. The battle took place roughly 4 kilometers from President Sharif's offices at Villa Somalia. He has not made any statements on the violence. However, sources in the TFG told us that President Sharif and his Joint Security Committee members discussed the fighting in late night meetings. Thirteen cabinet ministers and roughly 50 parliamentarians returned to Mogadishu before or shortly after the fighting began.

Comment

15. (SBU) It is likely true that the fighting resulted from TFG forces trying to reassert control over neighborhoods controlled by HI. Indha Adde's disavowal is noteworthy: he may be trying to curry favor with his business supporters, with the public, or even with President Sharif. This flare-up likely represents a turf battle between the TFG and militants in which dialogue failed. By our estimation, AMISOM's brief involvement was probably incidental. End Comment.

RANNEBERGER